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open spaces, a worthy ideal of English manhood and womanhood has to be conceived by us as an incentive to our imagination and a guide to our action; and this guide we must follow. Then perhaps, where we now watch the gradual enfeeblement of the town population, we should see a stronger nature grow, better trimmed and balanced, trained to a higher temperance, endowed with a greater respect for plain living, ready to make the many small sacrifices that temperance and cleanliness entail, and withal more deliberate in counsel. Such a nature would "its own physician be."

"Wouldst see a man all his own wealth,
His own music his own health?
A man, whose sober soul can tell
How to wear her garments well?
A happy soul, that all the way
To heav'n hath a summer's day?
Wouldst see a man whose well-warmed blood
Bathes him in a genuine flood? . . .
In sum, wouldst see a man that can
Live to be old and still a man? . . .
This rare one, Reader, wouldst thou see,
Heark hither, and thyself be he."

That is the moral of my essay.

C. S. LOCH.

LONDON.

INSTRUCTION OF THE YOUNG IN SEXUAL KNOWLEDGE.

IT would be impossible to name any subject of such general importance and interest as this, on which so little has been said; the reasons being that the interest and importance of the subject are outweighed by its difficulty, and that while the dangers of speaking are patent to the most superficial reflection, the infinitely greater dangers of reticence are not to be understood without prolonged observation and much thought. Hence in dealing with the question, How to instruct the young in sexual knowledge, I feel that I am entering an almost untrodden ground which craves the most

wary walking, and, to drop the metaphor, it is one in which any brilliant or confident utterances would be singularly out of place. The matters with which we have to deal require tentative investigation, analysis, and balancing of opposite opinions. It is not so much guidance of others that I would attempt, but exploration.

It would seem then, *à priori*, that a young human being who, by the natural laws of growth, is to enter on the possession of certain powers and be exposed to the temptation of grievously misusing them, should receive timely advice as to the right use of these powers and the meaning of them. This broad observation applies to all boys and girls, and with more force to the former than to the latter. But no sooner does a parent or a teacher seriously contemplate the imparting of this advice than he is checked by a strong misgiving which agrees with a still stronger instinct. The misgiving is lest he may suggest to his innocent-minded children some of the darker facts of life before it is necessary or advisable that they should know of them. The instinct within him is his own reserve. So it has come about, though to a less extent than formerly, that a vast majority of the young of both sexes are left to gather the knowledge of sexual laws in a haphazard way, either from companions or from books, or from observation of the animal world. It is still very widely felt that instruction on this subject, however reasonable in theory, is such as the human mind has a fatal power of turning into poison, and so the instruction is not given. Let us consider the precise effects of this policy of reticence on the two sexes separately.

The case of boys differs from that of girls in two ways: there is a more decided and inevitable effect of school life on boys; also, their bodily growth is far more likely to generate animal desires. In the school life of boys, in spite of enormous improvements, it is impossible that sexual subjects should be wholly avoided in conversation. Much liberty is allowed, and general curiosity prevails, and a still more general ignorance, and, though in preparatory schools of little boys under fourteen, the unceasing vigilance of masters and constant super-

vision combined with constant employment, reduce the evil of prurient talk to a minimum, yet the subject will crop up, and whatever is said about it will be the outcome of ignorance and probably morbidness of mind. And, even if this were not so, which is hardly conceivable, it is to be observed that the result is even then wholly negative. There is nothing gained or stored up in the way of sound knowledge to meet the manifold perils of the near future, but instead of that the mind is a chamber "empty swept and garnished," from which intrusive thoughts have been with the utmost difficulty kept at bay for a time. But in the public school, owing not only to freer talk and more mixed company, but to the boy's own wider range of vision, sexual questions and also those connected with the structure of the body assume prominence and begin to occupy more or less of the thoughts of all but a peculiarly constituted minority of the whole number. Moreover, without indicating at present the right way in which such matters should be handled, it will suffice if I point out that under the conditions of general ignorance and curiosity the treatment of the subjects of the propagation of life and the functions of the human body relating to that wonderful power is quite certain to be inadequate, misleading, wholly without proportion, and will probably be immoral, in that the boys most inclined to talk about them are those who have either gained a smattering of information from low companions or have pieced together with a morbid cleverness fragmentary and inaccurate observations culled from books and the animal world.

Moreover, and this is perhaps the most serious fact of all, the point of view taken by boys if left to themselves must inevitably be selfish. This will be seen at once if the second of the two conditions incident to boyhood be taken into account: the normal growth of animal desires, far stronger in the male than in the female, anyhow in England. At varying ages these desires make themselves felt, in a very large number of cases most imperiously, in some few quite irresistibly. Ordinarily at fifteen and sixteen years of age, the will power being still weak, the bodily desires are almost at their

height; if they increase later on, so does the power of will and the sense of prudence, so that, normally, the dangers of misuse are less from seventeen years onwards. Now, this fact of growth, by itself, would make it difficult for a boy to contemplate what he has heard of sexual relations, paternity, sexual indulgence, and so forth, from anything but a selfish point of view. At the time of puberty, mysteriously and silently the great fact of personality, the sense of egoism, asserts itself, and often produces a puzzling shyness and a reserve which sometimes struggles for utterance but cannot find it. This causes the view of life to be colored and interpreted by the claims of self, and to this is to be attributed the not very uncommon lapse into *temporary* insanity at this period, which manifests itself in very various and often, of course, innocuous forms,—rowdiness, moodiness, silence, etc.,—but occasionally in deceptiveness, dishonesty, arson, homicide, or suicide. But how much more inevitably is this selfish coloring given to the facts of sex, etc., when no wholesome counterbalancing knowledge of any kind whatever is given, but when every single suggestion and hint on the subject has come from those who are under the same dominating influences of ignorance, curiosity, and the claims of self! It is significant to note that of no other subject whatever can this be said. Whatever else a boy learns is either impersonal and unexciting, such as Euclid or geography, or else vigorous efforts are made to present the subject from an altruistic point of view, such as when history is blended with patriotism; and, again, games are chosen for him which require co-operation and the subordination of self to the interests of the house or school. Only in sexual questions, where curiosity is, even in innocent-minded boys, very powerful, and where selfishness is almost insured by the violence of animal desires, frequently normal, frequently pampered by over-feeding, is ignorance permitted, and no attempt made to invest the subject in its proper dignity and in close relation to the welfare of others and to universal law.

It is not the purpose of this paper to dilate upon the manifold evils which are—as far as can be inferred—the direct

outcome of the false and vicious opinion into which boys are allowed to grow, but there is one set of facts which illustrates clearly the deficiency here noticed and its inevitable result. The time comes when the young man faces the terrible phenomenon of the prevalence of fornication and the dedication of a whole class of women to a life of shame. Here again, colored as before by selfishness, the view of the young man of the world is that the question thus presented to him is one that concerns himself entirely: his health, his pleasure, his opportunities for marriage, his taste or his distaste. In ordinary conversation—at least in many circles of society—between young men on this tremendous question, there is rarely an allusion made to the fact that men's indulgence means the ruin of countless women, ruin of bodies and souls, and lives in thousands of cases shortened by the acutest possible misery. There is nothing whatever in a young man's bringing up to make him dream of the woman's side of the matter at all. It is a sexual question, and therefore for him a selfish one, because being a sexual question it is one on which reticence has been the order of the day, and the young man's inclinations have been his principal teacher.

Yet once more. After the stormy period of youth comes matrimony and the last phase of the deep and delicate subject of the relation of the sexes is entered upon. Again, quite inevitably, the man enters upon it as if his welfare and convenience were so far the most important matters for his concern that when problems come before him for solution, as they almost invariably do, demanding the finest adjustment of mutual conjugal claims and on his part real readiness of concession and discipline of will, he handles these problems not only selfishly but in a grossly uninstructed fashion: in ignorance of the possibility of continence and of the results of indulgence. It is true that good-heartedness, love, and a *felix temperamentum* will carry many safely through these perils. But still there is a vast amount of woful and preventable waste of married happiness, due to ignorance, which is the direct result of the prevailing reticence on sexual questions.

So much, then, for the effect on the notions of boys and men

of the policy of reticence. It will hardly be disputed that of all the awful evils which attend the violation of sexual morality—used in its broadest sense—by far the larger portion are due to the initiative and motive power of the male sex. If, then, the reasoning is correct which points to the license of men as due to the falseness of their conceptions of all sexual matters from childhood onwards, it will be seen how tremendous is the indictment to be brought against the still common practice of leaving boys to gather in a fitful and uncertain fashion for themselves stray fragments of vitiated information on the most vital and most intimate of all truths of the natural world. And yet after a dispassionate view of the facts around us, and after much reflection on the inevitable effect of a multitude of young men being brought up in ignorance of sexual ethics, I can only say that so far from the cause not being adequate to account for the result, it is on the whole surprising that things are not worse than they are.

In considering the case of girls I should wish to speak with less confidence than about boys, owing to the want of first-hand experience. Some of the conditions are obviously very similar. We find the same curiosity and the same readiness to correlate the facts of sex with those of animal nature if the chance of so doing is given. And therefore it may be laid down that the withholding of wise instruction from this sex as from the other entails a serious intellectual loss. Whether the moral loss is anything like so serious may well be doubted. The answer to this question depends partly on certain conditions relating to the most obscure and most repulsive portion of the whole subject. It has been indicated that the ignorance of boyhood induces two main evils,—misuse of organs and selfishness of view. The second of these two resulting evils is certainly less visible in the other sex, in which selfishness is less pronounced and aggressive than among boys. As to the former, no certain information is to hand. If, however, the facts be anything like so dark as they are in the case of boys,—and certainly some very ominous statements are made by doctors,—then clearly there is something of an urgent reason for teaching girls no less than boys the laws of the

treatment of the body and their connection with maternity. And the utmost that could be said on the other side would be that in most cases ignorance seems to do no harm, or that bad as is the tampering with boyish innocence, to enlighten young girls prematurely is even worse, and that in properly ordered homes everything goes well anyhow till marriage. This is all very plausible, but it begs the question whether everything does go well, and again much depends on how the teaching is given and whether prematurely or not. As to this more will be said later.

The argument, however, has introduced a very weighty and very thorny question. Granting that the need for instruction before marriage, though considerable, is less in the case of girls than of boys, yet when the time of possible matrimony is at hand, surely something should be said to prevent a young woman from entering on this great department of life ignorant of what marriage really means and of what is entailed by the step of giving herself bodily to her husband.

There is a trivial and offensive way of handling this particular topic which will best be avoided if in the following remarks only the broad principle is discussed. It should be remembered that the practical question is one peculiarly for a mother to deal with, and that in any particular case the mother's instinct with regard to the girl's temperament, her sensitiveness, and her capacity for deep feeling must of necessity be the chief guide not only as to the best way of acting, but perhaps as to the advisability of acting at all. And therefore of all that concerns the consideration of cases that may be called exceptional, as well as of all questions of detail, it would be quite beyond the scope of the present paper to speak. But there does appear to be a principle based on the broad ground of equity which should anyhow be not ignored. The question is, Should young women be to some extent enlightened as to the physical side of the marriage union, not before marriage but as soon as they are of marriageable age, before courtship? And the principle which seems entitled to respect is that in all relations of life a person who voluntarily or under inducement makes a contract, ought not deliberately to

be left in a condition of ignorance with regard to what the contract inevitably entails. The freedom to make the contract is conceded to a young woman by society; but convention in many cases imposes an artificial ignorance of its full meaning. This does not seem right: and still less so if her entry into the contract is the result of inducement or persuasion by others. And if it is felt that one result of the removal or partial removal of this ignorance might be to deter from prudential marriages, whether such deterrence makes for convenience or inconvenience, the very misgiving is equivalent to a large concession of the truth of the principle; it is tantamount to an admission that many prudential marriages are now made in blindness which would not be made if some artificial hindrances to knowledge were removed. To the principle thus broadly stated I see no serious objection.

Such seem to be the evils with which we have to deal. No attempt has been made to set them out in any detail. All that it is at present necessary to observe is (1) that it is an entire mistake to suppose that the systems of boarding-schools or day-schools or no schools at all are the *cause* of these evils. Bad management at school or neglect anywhere will of course foster them; but a prolonged and careful study of boys, and a close consideration of each particular failure in its origin and development, lead irresistibly to the conclusion that children's minds in nine cases out of ten are so constituted that stray and piecemeal information given in the wrong tone breeds in them distorted and vicious imaginations prompting to self-indulgence, and powerfully assisted by the physical sensations of bodily growth. Further, that this result is generally as good as insured by the vacuous condition, as regards this subject, in which the minds of the young are left by their elders. (2) That the resulting evils are enormously more prevalent than is commonly supposed. Certain huge facts in our social life stand out in awful prominence, and if reflected on indicate a vast mass of unhealthy growth among the young; much of this, experts know, is preventable: serious-minded people have for some time reached the conclusion that there is hope in fortifying the innocence of childhood

with some kind of sound instruction. But there still prevails even among these a great deal of doubt and hesitation as to the giving of the instruction; and to that problem I now address myself.

One or two broad principles may be laid down. The first is that matter is not evil. The time-honored doctrine which affirms the contrary is, it is true, less confidently stated than formerly, and the influence of Christian teaching on the destiny of the human body and the marvels of physical science have combined to save us from any formulated theory in these days. Yet it remains a fact that in the popular view of this subject there is much that tends to depreciate one of the greatest of all Divine or natural laws: the law of the propagation of life. To a lover of nature no less than to a convinced Christian the subject ought to wear an aspect not only negatively innocent but positively beautiful. It is a recurrent miracle and yet the very type and embodiment of law; and it may be confidently affirmed that in spite of the blundering of many generations there is nothing in a normally constituted child's mind which refuses to take in the subject from this point of view, *provided that the right presentation of it is the first*. Nothing can be more important than this, since there is in every child a native curiosity concerning every revelation of life, which leads to the first teaching about maternity and generation being eagerly absorbed and firmly stamped upon the mind at its most receptive age. It is nothing short of appalling to realize this simple psychological fact, and then to reflect on the tone in which the chance instructors of our children handle these sacred themes,—dirty-minded school-boys, grooms, garden-boys, any one, in short, who at an early age may be sufficiently defiled and sufficiently reckless to talk of them. No matter what palliatives may be applied later on, the poison thus imbibed never quite leaves the system. The only exceptions to this rule are the very rare cases in which the mind seems quite unable to take any interest in the matter; so innocent, in fact, as to be impenetrably dull, and children so safeguarded purchase moral immunity at the cost of a certain intellectual loss.

This, then, is the first principle to be grasped, that there is nothing in natural law which may not be spiritualized in its presentation to a child. The second is that the first presentation of this particular subject is the one which prevails over all others.

The third principle concerns the procedure to be adopted. The truths must not be isolated, but presented as among the phenomena which illustrate laws of nature, when other not dissimilar phenomena are already known. And if the facts are to be imparted in conjunction with other facts, so also the methods of teaching should be in no way peculiar, but the same as those which are found effectual in other subjects. Observation and reflection will generally tell us when a child begins to feel a curiosity about the fact of birth: when he silently discards the fables or myths with which his questions earlier in life were satisfied. The time, in the case of an ordinarily apprehensive mind, will be somewhere between eight and eleven years; and it is no objection to this rule that some children in the upper classes pass through their teens in total and contented ignorance of the whole mystery. This discussion would never have arisen unless such children were the exception. We are considering the majority. And in proceeding from the known to the unknown we shall take into account that the fact of maternity is much earlier guessed at than that of paternity. Therefore the teaching on the former ought to be made the starting-point for the teaching which deals with the latter, but of this I will speak again later.

There is, however, a certain divergence of opinion and practice concerning the last two points of procedure. It may be noticed that if ever any recommendation as to sexual instruction is made by male writers emphasis is laid on the laws of generation and reproduction, which are illustrated by plant-life, and it is urged that the relation between these laws and those which govern generation and birth among human beings suggests an obvious method of instruction. So parents are advised to explain the fertilization of plants and proceed to the facts of sex among human beings. And assuredly this view commends itself to many who have had a scientific train-

ing; they have known something of the mental expansion and uplifting which follows on the recognition of law in the universe, and they desire to make a young child a participator in their own enlightenment. On the other hand, in the very few cases which have come to my notice in which teaching of sexual facts has been carefully taken in hand either by the mother or the preparatory school-master, a different tone is adopted. Reference is made to the animal world just so far as the child's knowledge extends, so as to prevent the new facts from being viewed in isolation, but the main emphasis is laid on his feeling for his mother and the instinct which exists in nearly all children of reverence due to the maternal relation; in the hope that use may be made of the natural reserve which prohibits a light and careless handling of the topic among school-boys. Of the two methods the former is more scientific, the latter the more personal, appealing to the deeper emotions of the child's heart. Which is the best?

In answering this some account must be taken of the prevailing shyness or reserve which exists between parents and children, especially on the father's side, in relation to such subjects as this. It might be supposed that the more scientific method of instruction would, from its *quasi*-impersonal character, be less difficult for a father to employ than the other, which inevitably leads him on to sacred ground. But in practice this would not be found to be the case. The crux of the question is the personal application of the facts presented; and if that application is shirked the value of the lesson will be in many cases lost,—the boy will learn some interesting botanical laws, but he will not connect them with human beings until he is a good deal older, and by that time the mischief will have been done. It is true that a boy of scientific propensities and precocious reasoning power will connect the two subjects pretty readily at an early age, say fourteen, but something more is required than simply correlation with other facts. Knowledge by itself may suggest counsels of prudence, but it has long ago been discovered by school-masters that prudential warnings by themselves are quite impotent against an imperious appetite of any kind. And if a father,

desirous of avoiding the most delicate part of the subject, adopts the botanical illustration in order to lead up to a personal appeal, he will find that his difficulty when he comes to the point has been very slightly diminished by the scientific preamble. Perhaps it may be thought that too much account is here taken of the shyness of a parent with his own son. Nevertheless, it is really incontestible that this national characteristic has always been the grand obstacle to the giving of salutary sexual instruction to the young.

The real answer to the question between the two methods is that they ought to be combined, and that by far the greater stress should be laid on the personal appeal, which certainly ought to precede any scientific teaching about the propagation of life. It needs no deep psychology to prove this. Granted that a father's lesson about plant-life is immeasurably better than the unclean hints gathered from other sources, which is all that most children have to be satisfied with at present; still, such a lesson would be grievously defective in its power of appeal, because it probably would leave out of account the two greatest influences which a child is capable of feeling,—religious reverence and his love for his mother; the first not necessarily, but very probably. It may reasonably be asserted that the wholesome impressions of childhood, which consciously and vividly last through life, are those made by one or both of these influences. And we want both.

The truth of these statements will, however, be easier to gauge if I now proceed to give more in detail the nature of the teaching which seems to be required.

At some time between eight and eleven years of age, in any case before a child is sent to school, the fact of maternity should be explained. Probably he will know that as regards domestic animals there is some kind of law of offspring being born from the mother's body. In any case, it is very easy to remind him of scattered facts, either within his cognizance or on the confines of it, which enable him to understand that this is a universal law. For some few years, in most cases, not in all, he will have been realizing that there is some mystery about the matter, and that his nurse and parents have ceased

to put off his curiosity with tales of fairies, etc. So he is eager and fully prepared to hear that there is an explanation; and as far as the maternal side of the subject is concerned it should be simply stated, with emphasis laid on the suffering involved to his mother, and the wonderful fact given as a reason why the mother so dearly loves her son. And it would be well to go further and indicate the period of gestation, and explain the phrase in the Litany and some well-known passages in the Bible. It is a perfectly simple matter, and beyond all doubt a supremely natural process of instructing, and, as far as I know, never fails of its reward, to wit, a closer link of union between mother and child, and an implanting of a deep reverence in the child's mind for the greatest of all natural laws and for the parental relation.

But this last phrase is anticipatory. It will be at once felt by some that as to paternity there is a difficulty in touching on the subject at so early an age as under eleven years. Possibly, also, the difficulty would be felt to be more acute in the case of girls. If, however, this part of the subject is to be postponed, the questions arise, How is the curiosity about the connection between marriage and birth to be allayed? and, also, when is the supplementary teaching to be given? and, lastly, will the treatment be different in the case of children of different sexes?

I quite understand the idea that the more difficult part of the subject should be postponed. If left to the mother's instinct, probably this course would be often adopted. But I conceive that it would be at a heavy cost. In the first place, there must be risk in presenting any truth in fragments. Of course, it is necessary to present it in outline, but the outline should, if possible, be complete. To come to particulars, the best that could be done, if half of the truth is withheld, would be to say that after marriage God plants a seed in the mother which gradually grows into a child. But is it not obvious that this leaves great questions unanswered, or, rather, suggests a misleading answer? And, further, if, as I firmly believe, the result of the new knowledge is to deepen and hallow the child's natural feeling for his mother, it is a dangerous

policy so to implant ideas that the bond which unites him to the mother is strengthened, while the relation with his father is weakened by being still left in the region of the unintelligible. One must remember that the impressions left on a child's mind at that age concerning a subject so vastly interesting and so intimate as this are very deep and permanent ; and it seems as if the child's affection for the father might be to some extent impaired if any considerable time were allowed to pass before the child is permitted to conceive of him as the transmitter to him of his physical life. The enlightened affection should be fairly divided, one would suppose, between the two parents, and, as the mother during childhood is necessarily in closer touch with the child than the father, it seems that of the two there is almost more need for the affection for his father to be deepened by knowledge than his love for his mother. In addition to which the question is only postponed. When is the subject to be more suitably handled? The longer the postponement is the more room is given for silent surmisings, which, as we have seen, lead either to gross misconceptions or prompt to unhealthy talk ; or, in the case of some peculiarly constituted natures, there is so little curiosity that the mind remains in blank, uninquiring ignorance for many years. But this can never be foreseen. The instruction ought, in any case, to be completely given before a boy goes to a school where there is any likelihood whatever of unclean talk ; that means at so early an age, that there must always be a certain hesitation in the mind of an adult in conveying the first glimmer of knowledge on the most delicate of all topics. In other words, if the teaching is ever to be complete, there are strong reasons for making it so, in outline, from the very first.

In short, on reaching the point where the beginning of conception in the mother is explained, as indicated above, the parent can perfectly well add that the seed of life is intrusted by God to the father in a very wonderful way, and that after marriage he is allowed to give it to his wife, this being on his part an act of the love which first made him marry her. Seldom, I should fancy, very seldom would more than that be

required, in the case of girl children. The only difference in the case of boys would be that quite simply and quite delicately use should so far be made of the innate instinct as to indicate more definitely what portion of his body will have the propagation of life intrusted to it as its natural function; and, based on this instruction, a most impressive and much needed warning may be given against misuse. But far more important even than this will be the fortifying the young mind with lofty and wholesome conceptions of this great mystery of nature's economy *before* the time comes upon him when he will be exposed to ribald jesting on the subject. The hope is that when once the facts of life shall have been implanted in the child, bound up with and hallowed by all the associations which combine to make his home precious and sacred to him, suggestive of the greatest and best thing he has yet known, his mother's love of him, and his parents' love of each other, at least one grand result will be secured,—he will feel that any rude handling of such a theme, even of only its outer fringe, is like the profaning of the Holy of Holies in his heart, and he will no more suffer it than he would permit a stranger to desecrate the innermost shrine of his affections and take his mother's or his sister's name in vain. All the goading curiosity which impels other boys to pry into nature's laws eagerly and greedily, in blank ignorance of their mighty import, their unspeakable depth and spiritual, unearthly harmonies, has been for him forestalled, enlightened, and purified. He has learnt the first great lesson of the religion of love, and what God has cleansed he will not call common or unclean.

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